

1 REGULAR MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING
2 OF THE FALLS CHURCH PLANNING COMMISSION
3 July, 6, 2009
4 Council Chamber
5 7:45 p.m.

7 1. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Lawrence called the meeting to order at 8:32 p.m.

9 2. ROLL CALL:

11 Members Present: Ms. Hockenberry
12 Mr. Meeks
13 Mr. Lawrence
14 Ms. Rodgers
15 Ms. Teates
16 Mr. Wodiska

18 Member Absent: Mr. Kearney

21 Administrative Staff Present: Ms. Cotellessa, General
22 Manager of Development
23 Services and Planning
24 Director
25 Ms. Debra Gee,
26 Planning Specialist

27 Mr. Lawrence advised the commissioners that Mr. Kearney had e-mailed him prior to
28 tonight's meeting telling him he was called out of town and sent his regrets.

30 Mr. Lawrence apologized for the meeting's late start due to a presentation by EDAW
31 in the training room.

33 3. ADOPTION OF AGENDA:

35 Ms. Rodgers moved, and Ms. Teates seconded, to adopt the agenda.

37 Upon voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

39 4. PLANNING COMMISSION REPORTS:

41 Mr. Wodiska on June 17th attended the CACT meeting. Primary focus was the Lincoln
42 Avenue traffic calming case. Data was reviewed and there was very clearly a
43 significant speeding problem in the area on Lincoln Avenue from Great Falls to the
44 County line. Lincoln is a wide street and the 85 percent speed which is the metric
45 used to determine whether there is an issue is at 36 miles per hour as opposed to
46 25. There will be a hearing on September 9th to give citizens an opportunity to
47 voice their opinions about what is happening on Lincoln Avenue. He noted there
48 have been many accidents and 183 tickets issued in the last two and a half years
49 there.

51 Ms. Teates related she and Mr. Lawrence attended a reception at the Eden Center for
52 the new Smithsonian exhibit in the former National Liquidator's site. The exhibit,
53 which she recommended visiting, will be in place for another six weeks, included a
54 film about the pain and suffering people went through leaving Vietnam.

56 Ms. Teates attended the June EDA meeting, a developer's forum on green building.

57 There were several speakers regarding sustainability and how it works with economic
58 development.
59 Monarch Construction Company representatives attended. Ms. Teates recalled there
60 had been a presentation to the Planning Commission by Monarch about two years ago
61 for converting an old warehouse building off of Hillwood Avenue into their company
62 headquarters with the goal of it achieving Platinum LEEDS.
63 Monarch related construction had been held up by Fairfax County on a permit issue
64 for 23 months but they were proceeding.
65
66 Ms. Teates also announced the EDA will have another developer forum tomorrow,
67 Tuesday, July 7, 2009, at 6:30 p.m. in the training room which will continue the
68 theme on sustainability and green building.
69
70 Ms. Rodgers reported on Recreation and Parks. The Frady Park Master Plan was
71 almost complete. At Hamlet Park they had to stop work because they needed more
72 land to do daylighting of the stream and there's been federal funding problems. It
73 was postponed but would continue. The South Lee Street sale will contribute a
74 small portion of land as an access route when it actually is sold. It's now up for
75 public bid.
76
77 Ms. Hockenberry was glad to receive the information sheet from the EDA and asked if
78 it could also be e-mailed and also to be informed if anything was being opened or a
79 shovel being put in the ground in the City. As a tie-in to the EDA information,
80 Chair Lawrence also asked if everyone was on the e-mail list of the Falls Church
81 Chamber of Commerce.
82
83 Ms. Hockenberry reported the Arts and Cultural Task Force report went to City
84 Council at their last meeting where it was very favorably accepted. They have to
85 act on it and it will come back to the Planning Commission. While it was fairly
86 short, it had some distinct recommendations.
87
88 With regard to the branding of the North Washington Street corridor, at one of the
89 last meetings with the branding committee, a lot of information was given out and
90 Smith Gifford was willing to do a presentation. She thought the Planning
91 Commission should hear what was going on so they would know the background so when
92 the report comes to finality, there would be input in between. In that regard, she
93 thought a worksession might be a good idea.
94
95 Ms. Hockenberry also noted she recently observed a flyer stapled to a tree and
96 wanted to know if there was information for business owners about what they could
97 and could not do.
98
99 Ms. Cotellessa replied that was something they encountered not only on trees but on
100 telephone poles as well which can injure the line men climbing up. That was
101 covered by federal law but she said they would follow up on that.
102
103 Chair Lawrence attended the last Library Board meeting and found out that library
104 circulation last year set a record and went up by 17 percent.
105
106 Chair Lawrence also announced Caroline Reich, the library director's assistant, was
107 leaving to get her Ph.D. and would be moving to Canada. She has been a great part
108 of the library and everyone would miss her.
109
110 Chair Lawrence wanted to draw attention to the fact that at the EDA meeting, the
111 Commissioner of Revenue said since January 1, 2009, 72 new businesses have opened
112 in Falls Church, and given the economic environment, that was very good to hear.

MINUTES OF THE 6 JULY 2009 MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
UNAPPROVED DRAFT

113
114 Ms. Hockenberry wanted to mention that Kay Wiant, an educational leader and teacher
115 within the school system, passed away this past week. She was the Falls Church
116 Education president for many years and did a wonderful job of working with the
117 teachers, with the school system and with City Council. There would be a memorial
118 service for her at the Falls Church Presbyterian Church at 7:30 this Friday, July
119 20, 2009. She said it was a great loss to the community and the school system.
120
121 Ms. Teates added Ms. Wiant was a VPIS board member and also helped out with the
122 invasive removals at parks and the native plant movement. Ms. Wiant was an active
123 community volunteer beyond being a great teacher and educator.
124
125 5. **RECEIPT OF PETITIONS:** None.
126
127 6. **PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**
128
129 Ms. Cotellessa noted today was the first day with George service being operated by
130 Arlington Transit. There were not many calls today and she hoped everything was
131 going smoothly. Overall the experience with Arlington was they had been
132 responsive, positive, and helpful.
133
134 Ms. Cotellessa reported the West End Park site plan was in for review and they have
135 spoken with Akridge on the Gateway project coming back early fall. There were a
136 few minor changes which Ms. Cotellessa would be able to approve administratively.
137
138 Ms. Cotellessa would be working with Chair Lawrence on putting together an agenda
139 for the next meeting with the Economic Development Authority following up on Ms.
140 Hockenberry's discussion about Smith Giffords' war room. She thought it might be
141 interesting to see if they could bring to them some of the
142 branding initiatives and fold it into the meeting with the EDA along with other
143 things that would be on tap for that meeting.
144
145 She explained the whole branding issue goes to when you're in the City of Falls
146 Church versus in Falls Church. On a daily basis they receive calls about grass in
147 the medians, which is VDOT, in the Fairfax County portions of the Falls Church
148 mailing address and that folks really don't know where they live.
149
150 Ms. Cotellessa also informed the commissioners the Arts and Cultural District and
151 the branding district was moving forward. They would be put together in
152 discussions as they work on the Comp Plan.
153
154 Ms. Rodgers inquired if the 1230 West Broad Street special use permit was the old
155 "Chicken Out." Ms. Cotellessa acknowledged it was the BBT Bank where Chicken Out
156 was and it's for a drive-
157 through use. The Planning Commission would make a recommendation to the Board of
158 Zoning Appeals on whether to hear the special use permit.
159
160 Chair Lawrence asked what was the site plan amendment on 800 West Broad Street that
161 was withdrawn. Ms. Cotellessa explained the post office needed some kind of ramp
162 in the back to bring in some of the mail. There were a couple of very minor
163 amendments they were looking at making. They were able to incorporate those into
164 the as-built site drawings.
165
166 Ms. Cotellessa noted when a site plan has been approved, when there were a few
167 little things that needed to be done and if it didn't materially affect the plan,
168 she would approve those administratively to avoid having somebody coming back

169 through the site plan process which she believed onerous.
170
171 Those were little details which could be picked up and a record would be in the
172 file. The as-built would capture the features that were on site. She wouldn't
173 approve anything on an as-built site plan that anyone would notice. Examples would
174 be a storm inlet moving because they couldn't get an underground pipe in a certain
175 direction or a minor change of a doorway opening to match up with a sidewalk
176 entrance, those sorts of things but nothing major.
177
178 Ms. Rodgers inquired if the post office was able to find a site for a drive-by
179 mailbox. Ms. Cotellessa said they had not and it was her understanding the Post
180 Office would evaluate that down the road when they've been open for a while.
181
182 Chair Lawrence asked if the parking at the old Post Office that was marked for Post
183 Office only would be marked as additional public parking.
184
185 Ms. Cotellessa replied there was discussion about the interim reuse of the adjacent
186 property where the 2 Sisters was. Any use that goes in that area would need
187 parking. If the City can collect dollars as it's paying to maintain that property,
188 it may be that some of the parking for those uses might be accessed on that site
189 from the adjacent site as well.
190
191 She didn't know what the long term plans were but the Post Office still has its
192 facility there.
193
194 Chair Lawrence asked what the West End Park improvements application by the City
195 was. Ms. Cotellessa said a site plan was in that showed a skate park with a couple
196 of skate ramps, a little picnic area or pavilion area. It was according to the
197 Master Plan that was brought forward from Recs and Parks that was now going through
198 site planning. They were currently trying to deal with some lot and fire marshal
199 issues. The application is by the City to the City. The City goes through the
200 site plan for its properties as much as any developer. It was all of the City's
201 land and it was following the City's own process.
202
203 Ms. Hockenberry had discussed with Ms. Teates the many things coming in together
204 that would really affect the Comp Plan that would need a lot of work and she
205 wanted to make sure they gave themselves enough time to plan everything and really
206 get their arms around all of the reports.
207
208 Ms. Cotellessa said she believed Chair Lawrence had asked that the first meeting in
209 August be a review of the whole Comp Plan and ZOAC together. She thought they were
210 looking between the two chairmen of the committees at four or five issues currently
211 underway, one of which was the branding issue but that wouldn't be the focus.
212
213 Ms. Hockenberry thought they as the Planning Commission should have everything
214 presented to them.
215
216 Chair Lawrence inquired on the commissioners' August schedules should a branding
217 worksession need to be scheduled, and there was generalized discussion on
218 individual schedules.
219
220 7. OLD BUSINESS: None.
221
222 8. NEW BUSINESS:
223
224 a. Recommendation to the Board of Zoning Appeals on Special Use Permit U-1471-04,

225 an application for a Special Use Permit for a Group Home, in accordance with
226 Section 38-16(c)(9) of the City of Falls Church Zoning Ordinance, at 209 East Broad
227 Street, Zoned R-1A. The property owner is The Falls Church Presbyterian Church;
228 the applicant is Homestretch, Inc.
229
230 Ms. Debra Gee present the staff report as follows:
231
232 The original application was filed in late 2004 by both Homestretch and the Falls
233 Church Housing Corporation for the Special Use permit to operate a group home for
234 up to six single women in the property known as the Ives House owned by the Falls
235 Church Presbyterian Church.
236
237 The group home provides for traditional housing moving from homelessness to self-
238 sufficiency. The original Special Use Permit was reviewed by the Planning
239 Commission and recommended for approval. The Board of Zoning Appeals did approve
240 the application for a one year period with an option for two one year extensions.
241
242 Ms. Gee's understanding was that Mr. Christopher Fay, who's now the executive
243 director of Homestretch, was not a part of that organization at that time and was
244 unaware that there was a term limit on that Special Use Permit.
245
246 The Zoning Division has recently undertaken a review of its files for all approved
247 Special Use Permit applications and the period of time for which type of those
248 permits was granted. During that review it was determined that this particular
249 Special Use Permit had expired and the current applicant desires to continue
250 operating the group home.
251
252 The owner of the property, Falls Church Presbyterian Church, has provided a letter
253 of support for the application which was included in the commissioners' package.
254 Ms. Gee noted the Planning Commission probably could expect more Special Use Permit
255 renewal applications in the next several months.
256
257 The Comprehensive Plan for the City designates this area as residential and the
258 Zoning Code under Section 38-16 (c)(9) provides for group homes by Special Use
259 Permit in this zoning district.
260
261 Homestretch primarily provides its services at its office which is located at 370
262 South Washington; however occasionally case managers will visit the site and there
263 is sufficient parking for both the clients and case workers on site.
264
265 The zoning division has not received any complaints since the group home for the
266 subject site was first approved in 2004. The City Police Department has responded
267 to ten calls at the site since that time. Four, as noted, were related to traffic
268 stops that just happened to occur there; one was a process server, and another was
269 a 911 hang up call. There were four minor incidents that had occurred at that site
270 within the group home.
271
272 Ms. Gee reported that staff supports this application and recommends that the
273 Planning Commission recommend to the BZA
274 approval of the Special Use Permit for a group home for transitional housing for
275 maximum of 6 single women, with the following conditions: That the permit be
276 issued for a period of three years and that the applicant provide an annual written
277 report to the BZA for each of the three years documenting whether or not there have
278 been additional zoning or police complaints.
279
280 Chair Lawrence thanked and commended Ms. Gee on her staff report.

281
282 Ms. Rodgers asked if anyone was living in the group home currently and Ms. Gee
283 acknowledged it was in use.
284
285 Ms. Rodgers remarked since it was a couple of blocks from her house she went by
286 there all the time and she hadn't seen a lot of activity or seen any police hanging
287 out there because of bad situations. She thought it was a good addition to the
288 community and she would be willing to support approval of the Special Exception as
289 a neighbor. She so rarely saw any people there, she thought it had been empty and
290 that's why she made the inquiry.
291
292 Ms. Teates said she used the playground of the Presbyterian Church for girl scout
293 and boy scout meetings and noted it was so quiet she had wondered if anybody was in
294 there. She also thought it was a great addition to the community.
295
296 Ms. Hockenberry noted the home used to be used by the Presbyterian Church for
297 Cambodian and Vietnamese refugees. It always has been used with a good solid
298 social purpose and she admired the facility being used through the church and
299 leased to others. She thought it was a wonderful thing for the community.
300
301 Chair Lawrence asked Mr. Christopher Fay, the applicant, if he wished to speak.
302
303 Mr. Fay, executive director of Homestretch, related it had worked very well for
304 them and the intent was to have a very low profile because some of the women in
305 there were victims of domestic violence and had been human trafficked. The fact
306 that it is so quiet and no one knows who they are is to the advantage also of the
307 people in the home.
308
309 Mr. Fay advised that Homestretch has found the church to be extremely supportive of
310 their work, and they also found that the women in this facility succeed at a higher
311 rate than their other clients and Homestretch already had a high success rate.
312 About 90 percent go on and succeed, meaning they achieve self-sufficiency by the
313 time they were ready to leave, albeit at a higher rate because they don't have
314 dependents and can get by on a slightly lower income.
315
316 They've found it to be a very successful program. It was started as an experiment
317 but they decided it was working.
318
319 Mr. Fay offered to answer any questions from the commissioners.
320
321 The Chair opened the item to the public. Hearing no response, the item was closed
322 to the public.
323
324 **MOTION:** Ms. Hockenberry moved, and Mr. Meeks seconded, that
325 the Planning Commission recommend that the Board of
326 Zoning Appeals approve Application U1471 for a
327 Special Use Permit to allow Homestretch to operate
328 a transitional housing group home at 209 East Broad
329 Street for a maximum of six single women for a
330 period of three years with the following
331 conditions:
332 1. That the permit be issued for a period of
333 three years; and
334 2. That the applicant provide an annual written
335 report to the Board of Zoning Appeals, BZA, for
336 each of the three years documenting whether or not

337 there have been any additional zoning or police
338 complaints.
339

340 Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.
341

342 Ms. Teates thanked Mr. Fay for the information on Homestretch and found it
343 interesting to learn about his program.
344

345 **b. Discussion/Consideration of Activities for National Community Planning Month**
346 **and World Town Planning Day.**
347

348 Ms. Cotellessa provided information concerning National Community Planning Month
349 and World Town Planning Day. This year's theme is sustainability and sustainable
350 communities. She suggested two different types of activities: One, a program to
351 involve the schools, and, two, a meeting of regional planning commissioners to have
352 a "Meet and Greet" to talk about issues of common interest and maybe to look at
353 what different jurisdictions were doing.
354

355 Ms. Cotellessa had spoken with Chair Lawrence about renting a space and putting on
356 display each district's Comp Plans and supporting documents so other planning
357 commissioners could see what surrounding and different jurisdictions were doing.
358 It would be a venue to swap war stories, broaden horizons and start a dialogue with
359 adjacent community planning commissions, particularly as to Comp Plan outreach and
360 527 reports for VDOT.
361

362 Ms. Cotellessa noted since October is Community Planning Month, this needed to be
363 gotten out in September.
364

365 Ms. Rodgers inquired on the idea of getting interaction between the different
366 planning groups, and wondered if that wouldn't be more on the staff level rather
367 than a planning commissioner level.
368

369 Ms. Cotellessa was thinking of a Planning Commissioners "Meet and Greet." She knew
370 Chair Lawrence was interested in starting a dialogue and she thought sometimes the
371 best way to start a dialogue was in a social setting where it would be fairly
372 relaxed.
373

374 While Ms. Rodgers thought that was a good idea, she wondered if the interaction
375 would be mostly between staffs and would it be worthwhile for them to do something;
376 and secondly, if Ms. Cotellessa thought they could get the other planning
377 commissioners to attend.
378

379 Ms. Cotellessa related her experiences with several planning commissions in the
380 Outer Banks where they did something similar. There was a nice reception held and
381 it was an evening out. The planning commissioners were asked to bring their
382 spouses, making it a social event and not an awkward work event. She related it
383 had been a great success.
384

385 Ms. Rodgers asked what purview other planning commissions have; was it the same as
386 Falls Church, did they have more limited or more active ways to go about things,
387 and would they be able to interact on the same level?
388

389 Ms. Cotellessa explained in some cases some planning commissions had a much more
390 limited scope than they did and others had a broader scope and were able to act on
391 special use permits and special exceptions. Some don't get to weigh in on
392 recommendations. But all planning commissions in Virginia had to deal with

393 rezonings, zoning text amendments with subdivisions, with CIPs, and there were
394 certain things that all planning commissions had in common.
395
396 Ms. Rodgers thought it was a great idea and just wanted more information, and Mr.
397 Meeks and Ms. Teates concurred.
398
399 Ms. Rodgers also noted when she was certified as a planning commissioner, a
400 requirement was to attend another jurisdiction's planning commission meeting. She
401 thought it was really helpful to talk to other planning commissioners.
402
403 Ms. Cotellessa said she would bring back a list of potential ideas for the schools
404 at the August meeting and if the commissioners had suggestions about locations,
405 they could then talk about them specifically.
406
407 9. OTHER BUSINESS: None.
408
409 10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: June 1, 2009
410
411 Ms. Teates moved, and Ms. Hockenberry seconded, to approve the minutes June 1,
412 2009, as submitted.
413
414 Upon voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.
415
416 11. ADJOURNMENT:
417
418 Ms. Teates moved, and Ms. Hockenberry seconded, to adjourn at 9:24 p.m.
419
420 Respectfully Submitted, Noted and Approved:
421
422
423
424 Ann Hieber Suzanne Cotellessa, AICP
425 Recording Secretary Planning Director
426
427
428 The City of Falls Church is committed to the letter and to the spirit of The
429 Americans with Disabilities Act. To request a reasonable accommodation for any
430 type of disability, call 703.248.5040 (TTY 711).
431
432